



THE LOCAL HEALTH LINK

Stimulating Shorts from Frankfort

Happy Holidays from the Commissioner

Well guys, we made it through another year in pretty good shape. Tb is at an all time low, immunizations are at an all time high, infant mortality is staying down, the governor and the legislature looked favorably on us during the 2000 session, no one ran out of money, thirty people are taking part in the Kentucky Public Health Leadership Institute, at least five of you have entered the Doctor of Public Health program at the school of public health, and someone else is #1 in tobacco use. It's time to take a break and enjoy families and friends during the holidays. Goodness knows you earned it.

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Sometimes the work situation gets a bit testy but at the end of the day we can take pride in what we do. Today's Courier-Journal has at least two stories about what this outfit does. There is the EMT taking care of that baby boy whose mother died in the truck wreck, CHS lawyers and Vital Statistics staff working with the hospital to get a birth certificate for the baby, and environmental health staff and data analysts working with NIOSH and others to reduce the risks of carbon monoxide poisoning on house boats. It's been that way for as long as Kentucky has had a public health organization. I wrote an article for the KMA 150th anniversary and did some reading about Kentucky public health over the years. In 1859 the average age of death was 21. By 1904 life expectancy had risen to 35 years and in 1918 flu vaccine reduced deaths from influenza by reducing the deadly pneumonia that followed so many cases. Public Health and Kentucky's physicians

were always in the middle of those fights and will continue to be. I know that because of some of the things I see around here. Today, I found two finance staff busy blowing bubbles at each other (a gift from one staff member to the whole division) and just a week ago, the entire HANDS team was dressed in convict suits to demand a break from the press of business. I was going to take them to the CHS office but realized that there a meeting had been scheduled with the Justice Cabinet and decided against it. As long as Public Health has the kind of crazy lovable folks that hit it hard during the day and can laugh at the tough times, Kentucky will be fine.

Thanks for all you have done and continue to do...and take a few days to recharge your batteries over the holidays. I love you guys and wouldn't trade you for anything.

Rice Leach, M.D.
Commissioner, DPH

ACH Anecdotes

Diabetes Day in Frankfort:

Health advocates from across Kentucky gathered in Frankfort on Nov. 17 for the 2nd Annual Diabetes Day, sponsored by the Kentucky Diabetes Network.

An estimated 270,000 adults in the state have diabetes, but about a third of them have not been diagnosed and don't realize they have the disease. One of the reasons for Diabetes Day is to raise public awareness about the seriousness of the disease as well as the importance of blood sugar control.

Public Health Commissioner Dr. Rice Leach notes that it is important for people with diabetes to take good care of themselves and follow their doctor's instructions.

"It is equally important for the blood relatives of people with diabetes to control their weight, eat a healthy diet, and get adequate exercise," Leach said. "Many of those folks can avoid diabetes all together with a healthy life style."

Kentucky ranks 8th in the country in the prevalence of adult diabetes. Approximately half of the state's adult population is at increased risk of diabetes because of their age, being overweight or lack of exercise.

Diabetes is a disease characterized by a deficiency of insulin, insulin resistance, or both. Insulin is a hormone secreted by the pancreas that helps the body use sugar for energy. Diabetes

patients risk debilitating complications such as blindness, kidney disease and amputations. They also are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, stroke and high blood pressure.

The day started with a Diabetes Awareness Rally on the front steps of the State Capitol and moved into the Rotunda. Registration and a continental breakfast started at 9:30 a.m.

The program started at 10:30 and featured Derrick Ramsey, former University of Kentucky quarterback and Super Bowl champion, and Dr. Frank Vinicor, Director of the Division of Diabetes Translation, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and past president of the American Diabetes Association.

The Outstanding Kentucky Diabetes Coalition was recognized and a proclamation signed by Gov. Paul E. Patton designating Nov. 12-18 as Kentucky Diabetes Awareness Week was presented.

At 1 p.m., a forum with a panel of experts and a Diabetes Exposition was held at the Capital City Christian Church, located on Locust Lane at Versailles Road (just south of the East/West Connector) in Frankfort. The panel included a physician, a pharmacist, a nurse and a dietitian. The gym later opened for a diabetes exposition. Booths offered demonstrations on the latest diabetes products, educational materials, free samples and door prizes. Diabetes Day was open to everyone -- health care

professionals, individuals with diabetes and their families and friends, and anyone with an interest in increasing the awareness of the seriousness of diabetes throughout Kentucky. For more information call Paula White at 606-864-4764 or Linda Leber at 502-564-7996.

- statewide release written by
Gil Lawson, Nov. 13, 2000

In a related article:

Henderson Woman, Bowling Green Group Recognized For Diabetes Work:

A Henderson woman and the Bowling Green-Warren County Diabetes Today Coalition have been recognized by the Diabetes Control Program of the Kentucky Department for Public Health for their efforts to decrease diabetes-related problems in their communities.

The honors were announced by Dr. Rice Leach, Commissioner for the Department for Public Health, during the Diabetes Rally in Frankfort sponsored by the Kentucky Diabetes Network.

Jenny Carter, vice-president of the Henderson County Diabetes Coalition, was honored as the 2000 Outstanding Diabetes Coalition member. Her accomplishments include volunteer work on diabetes projects, beginning a local diabetes support group, fundraising projects and serving as a media liaison for the chapter. She has been working with the local coalition since 1996, when the Green River District Health Department started the group.

The Bowling Green-Warren County group was recognized as the 2000 Outstanding Diabetes Coalition. The chapter has sponsored diabetes awareness programs and screenings, provided free diabetes education classes, and worked with the University of Louisville in a one-day clinic targeting the Hispanic population. The coalition was started in 1995 by the Barren River District Health Department.

The Kentucky Diabetes Network is a statewide partnership of over 100 organizations, including the Kentucky Department for Public Health. It works to improve the treatment and outcomes for people with or at risk for diabetes and raise public awareness about the seriousness of diabetes.

Kentucky ranks 8th in the country in the prevalence of adult diabetes. Approximately half of the state's adult population is at increased risk of diabetes because of their age, being overweight or lack of exercise.

Noting that the percentage of Kentuckians with diabetes has nearly doubled in 10 years, Leach urged those gathered at the Nov. 17 event to apply the same energy to diabetes prevention as they have dedicated to controlling the disease in those who have it. "We have made a dent in the complications of diabetes, let's see what we can do about preventing the disease in the first place," Leach said.

Diabetes is a disease characterized by a deficiency of insulin, insulin resistance, or both.

Insulin is a hormone secreted by the pancreas that helps the body use sugar for energy. The treatment of diabetes should include efforts to keep blood sugar values as close to normal as possible. Without good blood sugar control, diabetes patients have a higher risk of debilitating complications such as blindness, kidney disease and amputations. They also are at higher risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke.

- statewide release written by
Gil Lawson, Nov. 27, 2000

Public Health Gets CDC Award For Tobacco Survey

The Kentucky Department for Public Health has received the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director's Award for Contribution to Public Health for the successful completion of the state's Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS).

The YTS is administered to students and contains questions covering seven categories. These are: prevalence of tobacco use, tobacco knowledge and attitudes, minors' access to tobacco, media and advertising of tobacco, smoking cessation, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke, and school curriculum. This information will assist the states in designing, implementing and evaluating their comprehensive tobacco control program.

The Kentucky YTS data was obtained from middle and high school students across the state from February through June, 2000. The information was gathered for the Healthy Kentuckians 2010

Prevention Initiative. The initiative is designed to promote healthy behavior, improve personal and public health and to prevent and reduce disease in the state.

- submitted by the Division of Adult & Child Health

Women Urged To Get Screening For Cervical Cancer During January

Kentucky women are being encouraged during January to follow through on this New Year's resolution: get a screening test for cervical cancer.

Although cervical cancer is nearly 100 percent preventable, an estimated 300 new cases of the disease will be detected in Kentucky during the year 2000, according to the American Cancer Society.

During January, which has been designated Cervical Health Month, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health Services is encouraging women to receive a Pap test, a screening test for cervical cancer, especially if they have never had one or if they are rarely screened for cervical cancer. Women who are uninsured or underinsured may be eligible for free or low-cost cervical cancer screening through the local health department.

Use of the Pap test as a screening tool for cervical cancer over the past 50 years has reduced the incidence of this disease in the United States by 75 percent. Yet despite this success, each year thousands of American women are still affected and die unnecessarily. Most of the cervical cancers that occur in the United States occur in

women who have not had a Pap test within the last five years.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, cervical cancer rates are higher among older women. However, dysplasia -- abnormal cells on the cervix -- is most common among younger women.

"This makes it very important that we expand our outreach to older women for Pap screening and continue our efforts with younger women," said Patty Sewell, program coordinator for the Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Project.

Certain sexual behaviors, including intercourse at an early age, multiple sexual partners and sex with a partner who has had multiple sexual partners, are also associated with greater risk for cervical cancer. Women with immunosuppressive disorders such as HIV/AIDS are considered at higher risk, as are women who fail to receive regular Pap testing and women who smoke.

Many health organizations recommend that annual Pap testing begin at the onset of sexual activity or at the age of 18 and should continue less frequently at the discretion of the doctor and patient after three or more annual tests have been normal.

Women who are past menopause still need to have regular Pap tests. However, women who have undergone a hysterectomy in which the cervix was removed do not require Pap testing unless the

hysterectomy was performed because of cervical cancer or its precursors.

For more information about Pap testing, call the Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Project at 502-564-7996.

- *written by Pam Spradling,
Division of Adult & Child
Health*

Walters Public Health Work Noted in Newsletter:

The work of Emma Walters, a dietician consultant with the Department for Public Health, was recently highlighted in "BrightNOTES," a newsletter published by the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health.

Walters has trained nurses, health educators, and nutritionists using the "Maximizing Resources for Results!" program materials. She has also worked with the DPH's Training and Staff Development Branch to train nutritionists who are transitioning from clinical to public health services.

- *extracted from the December 18,
2000 issue of the CHS Checkup*

Central Office Comments

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR:

Congratulations to Lamone Mayfield, Director of the Green River District Health Department who was awarded the Citizen of the Year Award by the Kentucky Nurses Association on October 19, 2000. This is a lifetime achievement award for outstanding contributions to improvements in

health and is the only award given to a non-nurse. Excerpts from the presentation ceremony follow:

Ms. Mayfield's dedication to creating a healthier region and commonwealth is well known by those who work with her. Her leadership and support of the nursing profession is much appreciated by the nurses who work in her region and across the state.

Lamone Mayfield was appointed Executive Director of the Green River District Health Department in October, 1990. At that time, she became one of only two women to be named to the executive directorship of a District Health Department in KY. In assuming this role, she became a model for professional women to emulate. Coming from a deficit budget to a \$4.5 million reserve is an example of her outstanding fiscal leadership.

Lamone models for all of her employees the importance of excellence of duty and the value of engaging one's contemplation, time and energy to create and produce societal and behavioral changes for the improved health and welfare of the citizens of our Commonwealth. Lamone served as Chairperson of the Legislative Committee of the KY Health Department Association during the last Legislative session. She led the public health education campaign that influenced the passage of House Bill 366, which lowered the illegal blood alcohol level to .08 in KY. Her testimony before the House Health and Welfare Committee for Early Childhood Development helped persuade the passage of legislation that will bring to public health

departments approximately 32.3 million dollars of Tobacco Settlement monies for implementation of Early Childhood Development programs.

Ms. Mayfield has actively sought and received funding to develop specific programs to advance the knowledge and opportunities of those within our midst who lack the socioeconomic and educational assets to help them make healthy life decisions. Through these programs, Lamone has helped ensure that these persons are provided the tools they need to become good parents and productive members of society.

Some of these programs include:

- **BUILDING STRONG FAMILIES**—a science-based developmental research program, which assists families in developing the skills, strengths and healthy support systems they need;
- **PERINATAL NURSING HOME VISITATION**—Implementation of issuing WIC food vouchers in the home during prenatal home visits. This dramatically increased the rate of completed at-home visits, which had risen to disproportionately high rates. Green River District Health Department Perinatal Home Visiting Program has now achieved the

designation of an official training site be the Department of Public Health;

- **DISTRICT SCHOOL HEALTH PROGRAM**—A program that began with two schools in Daviess County with high rates of poverty and related health problems with about 1000 students. Today the program includes nine adolescent and four elementary schools with approximately 10,477 students;
- **GRADUATION 2010**—A collaboration of health department and hospital nursing staff in which students beginning school in 1998 will be observed and assessed until the year 2010 by various social, legal, educational and health groups;
- **FIRST STEPS INITIATIVE POINT OF ENTRY**—Providing the nursing component for mental and physical health care for delayed and handicapped children; and
- **OUTREACH CLINIC**—Providing health services within the Owensboro spouse abuse facility.

Throughout her tenure, Lamone has encouraged staff to serve as community leaders and to continue their education. Work schedules are arranged in order for staff to attend continuing education classes, conferences, workshops and to belong to leadership

committees, boards associations and other community service organizations.

Judy Gilmore, BSN, Dir. Of Nursing for Green River District Health Department, calls Lamone “a true visionary in recognizing that nursing extends beyond the confines of the clinic. She has encouraged nurses to think creatively in seeking those opportunities that “...take us to the people.”

- submitted by Sarah Wilding, Director of Nursing

Flu Vaccines Can Be a Life Preserver for People With Diabetes:

For people with diabetes, getting influenza or pneumonia can mean more than aches and pains. It can mean being sick longer, going to the hospital, and even dying.

With flu season approaching, health officials are urging people with diabetes to take precautions. People with diabetes are about three times more likely to die of influenza and pneumonia than are people without diabetes. During the influenza epidemics, individuals with diabetes are six times more likely to go to the hospital.

An influenza vaccine and a pneumonia shot can significantly reduce sicknesses, hospitalizations, and deaths for people with diabetes, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But many Kentuckians with diabetes are not getting this added protection.

“Flu and pneumonia shots are easy, safe, preventive measures that

people with diabetes can take to protect themselves from the risks associated with flu and pneumonia," said Dr. Frank Vinicor, director of the Division of Diabetes Translation at CDC.

In Kentucky, there are about 178,651 adults diagnosed with diabetes. But according to the 1999 Kentucky Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, only 57 percent of these people reported getting an annual flu shot and just a third reported getting a pneumonia shot.

The best time to get a flu shot is between October and December. Unfortunately this year the availability of influenza vaccine has been delayed because of manufacturing problems and supplies are delayed to health care providers. The best estimate public health officials have is there will be adequate vaccine, but it may not be readily available until mid to late-November. It is, however, acceptable to vaccinate throughout the flu season. A new shot is needed each year. A pneumonia shot can be taken any time during the year and for most people one dose provides lasting protection. Local health departments have more information about dates, times, and places where flu shots are administered locally. People should consult their doctor before receiving a flu shot, a pneumonia vaccine or any other vaccine; some people may be allergic to vaccine components and should not be vaccinated.

Diabetes is a serious health problem that affects

approximately 16 million people in the United States and nearly 270,000 adults in Kentucky - including those who have not been diagnosed. Unfortunately, only two-thirds of them are diagnosed, leaving a third who are not under care for the disorder.

The behavioral risk survey estimates that half of the adult population in Kentucky is considered to be at increased risk of developing diabetes due to obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and increasing age of our population.

Other risk factors are: having a family history of the disease, having had diabetes while pregnant, or being African American, Native American, Latino or Asian, or anyone who has high blood pressure and/or high cholesterol. Symptoms that may be experienced by some include extreme thirst, urinating often and in large amounts, constant hunger, feeling weak or tired, slow healing of wounds, or unexplained weight loss.

Much of the illness and death from diabetes may be prevented or delayed by early diagnosis and aggressive treatment with diet, physical activity, self-management training, and new medications that can help people gain control of their blood sugar levels. An annual flu shot and a pneumonia vaccine are other important ways for people with diabetes to stay in control.

- statewide release by Gil Lawson,
October 30, 2000

Health Tips For Winter Weather: Preventive Action Is Best Bet

The freezing temperatures that have brought snow and ice to many Kentucky communities this month serve as a reminder that it's a good time to prepare for winter.

Exposure to cold temperatures can cause life-threatening health problems. Babies and the elderly are especially at risk, but anyone can be affected by cold weather.

Here are some suggestions from the National Center for Environmental Health, part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

Plan Ahead -- Emergency Supplies

Prepare your home and car for winter. Keep food, a first aid kit, water, a battery-powered radio, flashlight, blankets and other necessities in case you lose power. Similar items should be kept in your car, along with maps, tool kit, booster cables, windshield scraper and other items.

Have your car's radiator serviced, replace windshield wiper fluid and replace any worn tires.

Dress Warm and Stay Dry

Adults and children should wear: a hat, a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth, sleeves that are snug at the wrist, mittens, water-resistant coat and shoes, several layers of loose-fitting clothing.

Stay dry -- wet clothing chills the body rapidly. Excess perspiration also will increase heat loss, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm. Shivering is a first sign that the body is losing heat.

Avoid Exertion

Cold weather puts an extra strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the cold. Otherwise, if you have to do heavy outdoor chores, dress warmly and work slowly. Remember, your body is already working hard just to stay warm, so don't overdo it.

Be Cautious About Travel

- Listen for radio or television reports of travel advisories.
- Avoid traveling on ice-covered roads if at all possible.
- If you must travel by car, use tire chains.
- If you must travel, let someone know your destination and when you expect to arrive.
- Check and restock the winter emergency supplies in your car before you leave.
- Never pour water on your windshield to remove ice or snow; shattering may occur.
- Don't rely on a car to provide sufficient heat; the car may break down.
- Always carry clothing appropriate for the winter conditions.

Cold-Weather Health Conditions

Serious health problems can result from prolonged exposure to the cold. The most common cold-related problems are hypothermia and frostbite.

Hypothermia

Prolonged exposure to cold temperatures causes your body to lose heat faster than it can be produced. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Low body temperature affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. Hypothermia victims are most often elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; and people who remain outdoors for long periods.

Warnings signs of hypothermia for adults are: shivering, exhaustion, confusion, fumbling hands, memory loss, slurred speech and drowsiness. For infants, the signs are bright red, cold skin and very low energy. If a person's temperature is below 95°, the situation is an emergency -- get medical attention immediately. If medical care is not available, begin warming the person, as follows:

- Get the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- If the victim has on any wet clothing, remove it.
- Warm the center of the body first -- chest, neck, head, and groin -- using an electric blanket, if available. Or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets or clothing.
- Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry

and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.

Frostbite

Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation.

At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin -- frostbite may be beginning. Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite: a white or grayish-yellow skin area, skin that feels unusually firm or waxy numbness, a victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb.

If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care. Because frostbite and hypothermia both result from exposure, first determine whether the victim also shows signs of hypothermia, as described previously. Hypothermia is a more serious medical condition and requires emergency medical assistance. If there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:

- Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes -- this increases the damage.
- Immerse the affected area in warm -- not hot -- water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for

unaffected parts of the body). Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.

- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
- Don't use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

For more information, see the CDC website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/emergency/cold.htm>

- statewide release by Gil Lawson, December 21, 2000

Don't Make Alcohol The Centerpiece For Holiday Celebrations:

Alcohol can be part of holiday celebrations, but it shouldn't be the highlight of the party.

Christmas is a time for sharing with family and friends, for reaching out to others less fortunate and creating traditions. There are customs throughout the world, which are fun, interesting and don't involve alcohol.

For example, in Australia a flaming Christmas pudding is a traditional dessert and in some parts of the country a small gold nugget is baked inside with the belief that whoever finds it will enjoy good luck for the coming year. In Germany, children decorate their Christmas lists with

pictures and then leave them by the windowsill overnight, weighted with a little sugar so Father Christmas won't miss them.

There are many regional traditions in the United States. New Englanders serve lumberjack pie which features a mashed potato crust, filled with meats, onion and cinnamon. Virginia boasts oyster and ham pie. Pennsylvania Dutch traditional confections are sand tarts - thin crisp sugar cookies. Southern states have long included hominy grits in one form or another in their holiday celebrations.

Parties can be festive without alcoholic beverages. Hosts can serve alternatives such as non-alcoholic beer, punches, soft drinks or flavored coffee and tea. Creating other holiday traditions such as caroling, cooking special dishes, playing favorite games and other entertainment prevent people from overindulging. Establishing traditions that don't center around alcohol with children early in life may help keep them away from a dangerous pattern as they grow into adulthood.

"Most people are getting the message that alcohol doesn't have to be the mainstay of a celebration, especially with the recent change in the DUI law which says that a blood alcohol level of .08 indicates illegal intoxication," according to Mike Townsend, director of the Division of Substance Abuse in the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services. "However, there are still some folks who think that a gathering isn't complete without alcohol."

"Guests shouldn't feel embarrassed by refusing a drink and hosts shouldn't feel obligated to serve alcohol. People who are driving, taking medications, recovering alcoholics, pregnant or young should not drink alcohol period."

Townsend said that people tend to forget that alcohol is a drug, a depressant. It can affect people in a variety of ways and serves as an uninhibitor that may lead people to say or do things they normally would not if sober. Drinking alcohol can lead to irresponsible behavior and unwise choices such as unsafe sex or getting into fights.

Alcohol can also be dangerous to your health. According to Western Insurance Information Service, there is an alcohol-related traffic fatality every 32 minutes and an alcohol-related traffic injury every two minutes in the United States. Two out of every five Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash during their lifetimes. And, contrary to popular belief, 87 percent of drivers with a high blood alcohol content in fatal crashes have had no alcohol convictions during the past three years.

The following tips can help partygoers reduce the risk of alcohol use, if they choose to drink:

- Drink slowly and avoid gulping an alcoholic beverage. On the average, the body can only metabolize one drink an hour.
- Eat food with your alcoholic beverage to slow consumption
- Realize that alcohol metabolism is based on

the size of the individual. For example, a 200-pound person will be less affected than a 110-pound person who consumes the same quantity of alcohol over the same period of time.

- Remember that wine coolers are not soft drinks. They have as high an alcoholic content as beer.
- Don't drink and drive or even ride with someone who is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- If you have a problem with alcohol or are a recovering alcoholic, decide how to handle the temptation to drink before going to a party.

If you or someone you know has a problem with alcohol, help is available by calling 1-888-729-8028, a toll free prevention hotline sponsored by the Division of Substance Abuse or by contacting your community mental health center.

*- written by Mike Townsend,
Dept of Mental Health/Mental
Retardation*

Epi Epistles

State Worker's Deeds Prove Good Samaritans Still Exist:

When Helen Coulter arrived at the Office of Vital Statistics in Frankfort on Nov. 10, a Friday, she was unaware of the comedy of errors she was setting into motion.

Coulter, a telephone account executive for the Herald-Leader's classified department, was finishing some last-minute details for her trip to Jamaica. She was supposed to leave the following Monday, but she had just realized that the most important detail - getting a copy of her birth certificate so she could leave and re-enter this country - was one she had put off until the last possible moment.

It was 2:30 p.m.

No problem, she thought. If she rushed, she would get to the vital statistics office in Frankfort before it closed at 4:30 p.m.

But when she got there, she realized it was Veterans Day.

Office closed.

Now, if it were one of her children in this predicament of procrastination, this is where Coulter would have launched into a soliloquy on the wisdom of forethought, of not waiting until the last minute to perform tasks. "I know I shouldn't have done that," Coulter said. "But I did. I won't do it again."

And when it comes to getting vital-statistics documents, waiting until the last minute is especially unwise. They're a busy bunch in Frankfort.

"We have approximately 15 million records: birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates," said Sandra Davis, state registrar of vital statistics. "We get about

426,000 requests in one year; 23,000 phone calls each month."

Add Coulter to this year's list of callers. Urgent callers, that is. Her tickets were paid for, her itinerary set. She had to get a birth certificate.

That's where good fortune began to shine on Coulter.

While Coulter was seeing her Jamaican vacation disappear right there in the Frankfort lobby, the security officer's phone rang.

On the line was Barbara Murray, a quality assurance representative for vital statistics, who was calling about another matter.

The security officer told Murray that he had a near-hysterical woman in the lobby, and he wondered whether there was anything Murray could do.

Willing to help anyone who had the great fortune of traveling out of the country, Murray said she'd try.

"I told her I was in Lexington and wouldn't be in the office that day," Murray said. "I asked if I got it to her on Saturday if that would be OK."

A grateful Coulter had no problem with any help she could get to uncook her own goose. Coulter filled out the application and left the necessary fee.

Act 2, Scene 1

The next morning, Murray gathered the two Pomeranians she had brought with her on her visit to Lexington and headed back to her home in Frankfort.

The dogs got loose when Murray opened the door in Lexington and scooted about the unfamiliar neighborhood. It took the better part of an hour to retrieve them. It was just the beginning of an unusual day.

Murray took her dogs home and then went to the office to look for Coulter's birth certificate.

The way the data is set up, the birth certificates before 1961 are on microfilm, not computer. Coulter, well on her way down the other side of the hill, was definitely born before 1961.

Murray found the correct microfilm reel. When she zoomed in on Coulter's birth certificate, she found it marked with a big X. That meant it had been amended.

She would have to get into the vault to secure the original certificate. But Murray didn't have access to the vault.

For two hours or so, Murray tried to reach her Frankfort co-workers who could open the vault. No one was home.

At this point, I would have thrown up my hands and said I tried. But Murray is so much nicer than I.

About 1:30 p.m., she realized she had the cell phone number of a co-worker, Ginger Travis, who lives in Shelbyville. She called and learned that Travis just happened to be shopping at the Frankfort Wal-Mart and would be right over.

Travis came in and opened the vault, and Murray made a certified copy of the original certificate.

Because her office is strict on handling cash, which Coulter had clipped to her application, Murray put the money and the application away and locked them up.

It was then nearly 2 p.m., and Murray had an appointment she was about to miss in Lexington. She put Coulter's certificate in a manila envelope, called her to say she was on her way and drove to Lexington.

Once there, she realized she had locked Coulter's phone number away with the application and the money. In Frankfort.

She called every Coulter in the phone book, more than 20, but none was right.

Jamaica bound

OK. Now, even if you were as nice as Murray, this is where you would have given up and said you tried.

Not Murray.

"My plans were to spend the night in Lexington, but I couldn't leave her hanging," Murray said. She drove all the way back to Frankfort, re-entered her office, found Coulter's phone number and called her to make arrangements for Coulter to get her certificate.

"Helen got to Jamaica by the grace of God," Murray said.

Amen.

"She called me about 2 p.m. and said everything was fine and that she was coming to Lexington," Coulter said. "I didn't hear from her again until about 7 p.m. I didn't know what to think.

"Then when she told me what she had been through, I couldn't believe it.

"I feel God works through people," Coulter said. "I really am so grateful. You don't find people like that anymore."

I agree.

State workers get such bad reps for having so many holidays and days off because of snow, we forget sometimes that they are human beings who care about us.

"If I could help her when she needed help, then it was my job to do that," Murray said. "I would say a majority of workers here would have done the same."

We could all learn from Murray how to serve others.

The other moral to the story?

Get your birth certificates early.

- extracted from December 10, 2000 Lexington Herald-Leader, written by Merlene Davis

Lab Lines

Laboratory Passes Inspection:

"No deficiencies found" are the words you want to hear from the inspector.

Those are the words the Division of Laboratory Services, our state

public health laboratory, heard on Nov. 3 when it successfully passed inspection for state laboratory licensure and federal laboratory certification. Surveyors from the Office of Inspector General conducted the inspection.

The Division of Laboratory Services is certified by five accrediting bodies to perform about 200 different kinds of clinical and environmental exams. The laboratory must adhere to strict guidelines of analysis and quality assurance required by each of the accrediting bodies while performing nearly 1 million procedures annually. ***Wow, that's a lot of work!***

Laboratory testing performed by the division is to support the programs of the Department for Public Health, the Occupational Safety and Health Program (Labor Cabinet) and the Coroner's and Medical Examiner's Program (Justice Cabinet).

Congratulations to the dedicated staff of the Division of Laboratory Services!

- submitted by Dr. Samuel Gregorio, Division of Laboratory Services

PHPS Passages

Make Sure Your Turkey Is Cooked: Food Handling Tips for Thanksgiving (Nov. 23):

Like most Americans, many Kentuckians will sit down to a turkey dinner this Thanksgiving

to celebrate and share time with family and friends.

Since food is a common feature for most holiday celebrations, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health Services wants to make sure the food is prepared properly. Even though our foods, processors and suppliers are some of the best and safest found anywhere in the world, each year some Kentucky families may experience illness from their Thanksgiving meal. The Cabinet for Health Services wants to remind Thanksgiving cooks to follow some general food safety precautions.

"Many foodborne illness in Kentucky may be attributed to improperly handled foods in our homes," said Guy Delius, manager of the food safety branch in the Department for Public Health. "There are some simple and easy food safety practices we can do in our home to minimize the occurrence of food poisoning."

"While it's important to handle foods in the home safely all the time, it's especially important to take extra care during the holidays, because families are preparing more food than usual and more family members may be helping in the kitchen," Delius said. "Also, food is often made in other family members' homes and transported to the meal site, and people often eat the leftovers for days."

Here are some more tips for the safe handling of food:

- When dealing with poultry, make sure it is not undercooked and do not let

raw poultry or meat juices touch any other foods.

- Cooks should wash their hands frequently when handling food, and sanitize utensils such as knives, and items like cutting boards so that food is not cross contaminated.
- Washing food including fruits and vegetables, before preparing it.
- Food should be promptly refrigerated.

Health officials reinforce the need to wash hands often and thoroughly:

- Unclean hands are often are the source of food contamination.
 - * Always wash you hands prior to preparing foods.
 - * Wash your hands after you have handled raw meats.
 - * Wash your hands after you handle raw produce.
 - * Use soap, hot water and dry your hands with clean paper towels.

Health officials offer the following guidelines for thawing a turkey:

- ❖ Thaw in a refrigerator with the temperature at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Allow 3-4 days for thawing. Place under cool running water at a temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit or less; or if the entire thawing and cooking process will be done in the microwave oven, increase the temperature by 25 degrees Fahrenheit over normal conventional oven temperatures for a turkey to ensure even thorough cooking in the microwave and cook it immediately after thawing. When

thawing turkey in a microwave oven, cook it immediately instead of letting it sit out.

The following guidelines should be used when preparing turkey and stuffing:

- ❖ Cook at 325 degrees Fahrenheit until the internal temperature of the meat reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit with no interruptions in the cooking process. A meat temperature of 140 degrees Fahrenheit should be maintained until the turkey is served or the meat should be immediately sliced and refrigerated on shallow platters so that rapid cooling will occur.
- ❖ It is not possible to cool a whole cooked turkey in an ordinary freezer or refrigerator within a few hours. Any undercooked juices, stuffing or meat in the thickest part of the turkey may result in bacterial growth over extended cool down time, such as overnight or for longer than four hours.
- ❖ Platters should not be stacked on each other since proper air circulation is necessary to facilitate cooling. A turkey should be thoroughly cooked and rapidly cooled. A metal stemmed, dial-type thermometer placed in

the thickest part of the thigh or breast should be used to measure the turkey's internal temperature. It is best to cook the turkey and stuffing separately. If they are prepared together, the turkey should not be stuffed until immediately before cooking.

Follow these suggestions when storing poultry leftovers:

- ❖ Refrigerate at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Wrap turkey and stuffing separately in shallow dishes or platters for storing.
- ❖ Prepare sandwiches on sanitized cutting boards and use clean equipment.
- ❖ To reheat a turkey or serve in a hot dish, rapidly heat it to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit and make sure it is heated thoroughly.

Follow these suggestions to properly clean utensils:

- ❖ To sanitize equipment or utensils after thorough washing and rinsing, immerse them for 30 seconds in clean, hot water at 170 degrees Fahrenheit, or immerse for at least one minute in a clean solution containing at least 50 parts per million of chlorine (one teaspoon of 5.25 percent household bleach per gallon of water at 75 degrees Fahrenheit).

For cutting boards or equipment that is too large to immerse for sanitation, swab or wipe the clean surface with the sanitizing solution.

For more information about food safety, contact the Food Safety Branch for free literature at (502) 564-7181. Also, visit the Cabinet for Health Services' Food Safety Branch web page at: <http://publichealth.state.ky.us/Food-Program.htm>

- statewide release by Gil Lawson, Nov. 13, 2000

Health Precautions Offered To Hunters Preparing Game

With hunting season approaching, Kentucky health officials are offering sportsmen a few tips about what to do after they get home from their hunting trip.

Wild game that is to be eaten such as deer needs to be prepared properly so it will not cause illness.

"We know Kentucky's regulations on harvesting deer have been realigned this year to allow for an increase in harvest to better safeguard the herd. Because more deer may be harvested this year, there will be a lot of hunters with venison to cook this season," said Guy Delius, manager of the department's food safety branch. "Venison is a good source of lean meat, with little fat and plenty of protein, and should be safe for your family meals if the following guidelines are followed."

Field Dress and Cool Game Quickly:

Be sure to field dress your game as soon as possible. After field dressing, be sure to cool the carcass promptly. If taken to a processor, the processor will cool the entire carcass until the processing is conducted. If you process your own meat, skin and thoroughly wash the animal, then cut into smaller sections which may be refrigerated promptly. Meat left at warm temperatures will allow rapid harmful bacteria growth and may lead to spoiling of the meat.

Wash Processed Game Thoroughly Before Refrigeration and Freezing

Thoroughly wash (rinse in clean potable water) all processed meat before refrigeration and freezing. After cutting smaller portions of the meats, be sure to wash off the meat before cooking/refrigerating or freezing. Rinsing the meat will dislodge loose particles of undesirables and will remove a lot of the bacteria from the outer portion of the meat.

Refrigerate or Freeze Promptly

After washing in clean potable water, refrigerate at 41 degrees Fahrenheit or cooler, or freeze at 0 degrees or colder. The quicker we refrigerate or freeze the processed meat the safer it will be. Dangerous bacteria grow slower under refrigeration temperatures.

Practice Thorough Hand Washing

The cook's hands must be clean before and after handling raw meats. If a cook's hands are not

clean before handling the raw meats, harmful microorganisms may be introduced onto the meat. Hot water, soap and paper towels are the tools needed to adequately wash hand before cooking. Unclean hands contaminate food.

After starting with clean hands and then handling, processing, or cooking venison, be sure to wash your hands after you handle the raw meats. You will spread the bacteria of the raw meat to other surfaces in your home if you don't wash your hands after handling.

Cross Contamination

Be aware of cross contamination when other items come in contact with the raw meat such as knives, cutting boards, counter tops, plates, or pans. The meat could leave bacteria on the surfaces and these items should be washed and sanitized thoroughly before being used for any other food. To sanitize a food contact surface you may use 50 parts per million (one teaspoon of 5.25 percent bleach per gallon of water at 75 degrees) to soak, spray or wipe on clean food contact surfaces. This will kill any unwanted bacteria.

Cook Meats Thoroughly

Cooking meats to the right temperature should destroy any unwanted food related organisms. This is probably the most important step to the safety of your meal. No matter how you processed your venison, when it comes time to cook your meal, be sure it is cooked thoroughly to an internal temperature (inside the meat) of at least 165 degrees.

If you follow these simple food safety guidelines in handling and preparing venison your family meals should be safe and nutritious.

For further food safety information, please call the Food Safety Branch at (502) 564-7181, or your local Health Department food safety inspector.

- statewide release by Gil
Lawson, Nov. 13, 2000

Public Health Officials Urge Caution When Buying Holiday Toys For Kids

Kentucky parents have been hitting the malls buying toys for the holidays this month. The Cabinet for Health Services wants to pass along a few safety tips to make sure this holiday season is a safe one for all children.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission requires toy manufacturers to meet safety standards and to label certain toys that could be a hazard for younger children. Parents should look for these labels in toys and gifts their children receive.

"Parents should evaluate toys as soon as they get them to make sure they are age appropriate and don't have small parts that could be a choking hazard for young children," said Mike Cavanah, program administrator in the Environmental Management Branch of the Department for Public Health. "Small parts in toys for older kids should be kept away from younger siblings."

One of the more popular toys this year are lightweight scooters.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, more than 30,000 emergency room injuries associated with scooters have been reported this year. Nearly 85 percent of these injuries are to children age 14 and under.

The Commission and the National SAFE KIDS Campaign recommend appropriate safety gear with scooters, including helmet, elbow and knee pads when riding. Adult supervision is recommended for children ages 8 and under. Parents should check scooters for hazards and make sure the toys are ridden on smooth, paved surfaces.

(Two kinds of scooters were recalled this month because of safety issues concerning handles: Kent Kickin' Mini-Scooters and Kash 'N Gold Racer X20™ recalled a total of 97,500 scooters in cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.) Riders should avoid steep hills and should never hitch a ride from a car, bus truck or other vehicle. Don't ride the scooters at night.

Here are a few general holiday toy safety tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could be a safety hazard for younger children.
- Check the size of the toy and make sure there are

no parts that could be swallowed.

- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.
- Children under age 3 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games and balls with a diameter of one and three-quarters of an inch or less.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. (Four children died from choking on balloons in 1999.)
- Watch for strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

For more information, see these websites:

www.safekids.org or
www.aap.org or
www.cpsc.gov

- written by Mike Cavanah,
Division of Public Health &
Public Safety

Staff Spotlight

Northern Kentucky Health Department Chosen as National Demonstration Site:

The Northern Kentucky Health Department and the Northern Kentucky community have been selected as one of nine demonstration sites nationwide to implement the new MAPP

("Mobilizing for Action through Planning & Partnership") tool. The MAPP process is a new community health assessment method that was developed by the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) and will be initiated in January 2001. The announcement of this honored selection was made by Paul Erwin, M.D., M.P.H., Regional Director of the East Tennessee Regional Department of Health at the annual meeting of the Northern Kentucky Community Health Committee. This meeting took place on Tuesday, November 28, 2000, at 7:00 p.m. at the Northern Kentucky Health Department's District Office, 610 Medical Village Drive, Edgewood, Kentucky. Erwin explained MAPP, what it entails and how it will benefit the Northern Kentucky community. Then it will be up to the Committee to give its approval for participation with George Graham, Ph.D., Public Health Director of the Northern Kentucky Health Department as final approval.

"We feel quite honored with being chosen to initiate this new public health assessment tool," said Dr. Graham. "Our agency has proven itself as one of the most progressive health departments in Kentucky and the nation, and this puts us at the cutting edge of public health in the nation."

The Northern Kentucky Health Department was the first Kentucky health department to initiate the APEX-PH (Assessment Protocol for Excellence in Public Health) process, a comprehensive community health assessment tool in 1993 and was one of ten sites

nationwide to be a pilot project for the PACE-EH (Protocol for Assessing Community Excellence in Environmental Health) process in 1998 to prioritize and plan community environmental strategies. Both of these tools are the foundation for the MAPP process with the MAPP process building on community assets or strengths to a greater extent.

The MAPP process looks at the area's health data but even more at the individual communities. It looks at community assets, community status, the local public health system assessment or infrastructure, and the forces of change or who in the community can get things changed.

The nine MAPP Demonstration Sites include:

- ❖ Amherst Health Dept, MA
- ❖ City of Hartford Health Dept, CT
- ❖ Columbus Health Dept, OH
- ❖ Lee County Health Dept, FL
- ❖ Mendocino County Public Health Dept, CA
- ❖ Metropolitan Nashville / Davidson County Health Dept, TN
- ❖ Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Dept, KY
- ❖ San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, TX
- ❖ Taney County Health Dept, MO

- submitted by Peggy Patterson, Northern KY

Independent District Health Department

Publicly Funded Family Planning Clinics Prevent Unwanted Pregnancy; Decrease Abortion:

In Boone, Campbell, Grant, and Kenton counties, the Northern Kentucky Health Department provides a range of contraceptive and reproductive health services to over 4,000 women each year.

These services include contraceptive and sexual health education, provision of a contraceptive method, health risk assessment, preconception counseling, screening and treatment for gynecologic infections, and cancer screening services such as Pap smears and breast exams. Throughout our nation, there are 7,000 publicly funded family planning clinics working quietly and effectively to provide reproductive health services to women. A new report, by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, Fulfilling the Promise: Public Policy and U.S. Family Planning Clinics, highlights the accomplishments of, as well as the ongoing challenges to, our nation's family planning clinics. The Alan Guttmacher Institute (AGI) is a not-for-profit organization focused on reproductive health research, policy analysis and public education.

The Title X Family Planning Program, a major source of funds for family planning clinics, was established in 1970. As a result of two decades of efforts in family planning, almost 20 million unwanted pregnancies have been prevented---nine million of these would have otherwise ended in

abortion. Family planning clinics funded by Title X have nearly eliminated the difficulties of access to contraception historically faced by many women due to income, race, or ethnicity.

"It is very good to see a report like this released at this time," states Susy Kramer, M.D., Medical Director of the Northern Kentucky Independent District Health Department. "It validates our efforts to insure that every woman has the ability to plan her family and choose the timing of her pregnancies."

Family planning clinics have faced challenges on the road to the major accomplishments detailed in the AGI report. In 1999, Title X funding was 60% lower, after taking inflation into account, than its funding had been 20 years earlier. Opponents of family planning programs use the unfounded argument that such clinics promote sexual activity among teenagers and that they promote abortion. In fact, the average teen does not visit a family planning clinic until 14 months after she has become sexually active. By law, Title X funds may not be used to pay for abortions.

Locally, the Northern Kentucky Health Department has dealt with similar challenges and obstacles. Most recently, this took the shape of a now defeated movement to restrict the ability of health department staff to educate about the full range of available contraception. "It is unethical for a healthcare provider not to provide a patient with all her options," explains Dr. Kramer.

Family planning services are available at sliding scale fees based on income at each of the county health centers of the Northern Kentucky Health Department.

- *submitted by Peggy Patterson, Northern KY Independent District Health Department*

Art Grant Combines Folk Dancing and Cardiovascular Health:

On June 26, 2000 the Harlan County Health Department was awarded a grant from the Kentucky Arts Council to teach folk dancing to the students of Green Hill Elementary School. The grant titled "Folk Dancing As A Heart Healthy Exercise" was a collaborative effort between the Harlan County Health Department, Harlan County Board of Education, and the Green Hills Family Resource Center, and was applied for because of concerns regarding the lack of organized heart-healthy exercise for students in the elementary schools.

"Healthy People 2010" lists the leading health indicators as: physical activity, overweight and obesity, tobacco use, substance abuse, responsible sexual behavior, mental health, injury and violence, immunizations, and access to health care.

The grant employs the services of folk artist James Blair and Public Health nurses Martha F. Blair and Ann Caldwell to introduce the students, teachers, and the community to a dance form that

elementary students can learn, perfect, perform, and will make them healthier, happier, and more productive citizens for Harlan County. The class is being taught to 4th and 5th graders and their teachers one hour per day on Mondays and Thursdays for one semester.

James Blair and Martha Blair are assuming the responsibility for teaching history of the appreciation for folk dancing as an art form. Mrs. Caldwell incorporates the exercise component as it relates to health in the semesters' activities. Instructions and music for the dances taught will be left with the teachers and Public Health Clinic at Green Hills to assist them in continuing the program after the semester ends. A school assembly program will be planned with parents and members of the community invited to watch the students and teachers demonstrate the folk dancing skills learned.

- *submitted by Lonnie Saylor, Harlan County Health Dept.*

Training Tidbits

RTC Training Courses – FY01

The Emory University Regional Training Center, Atlanta, GA, will provide fifteen (15) course offerings during fiscal year 2001 (July 1, 2000– June 30, 2001). All fifteen (15) offerings along with course content, dates, locations, and some registration forms will be forwarded to District Training Contacts and LHD Administrators.

Any LHD employee wishing to attend these offerings should contact their District Training Contact or LHD Administrator

for course content and registration forms.

You may contact Ms. Sandy Williams with any other questions regarding RTC opportunities at 502-564-4990.

Video / Audio Tapes ALERT:

If you have any outstanding video or audiotapes on loan for more than three weeks, please return them to me at the address given in the Editor's Note. Thank you for your cooperation.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Please submit articles, staff spotlight nominees, or suggestions for the newsletter to:
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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Just want to thank all of you for your help on this newsletter. Without the articles you contribute and the great staff about whom I write, there would be no newsletter! Please keep it up because I appreciate it so much – you all make this a wonderful tool of communication for all of us in Public Health.

I also wish each of you a very safe & happy holiday season, some well deserved time off, and the happiest new year ever!

Sandy